

Low-cost Initiatives Yield Results

Initiative in Brief

Bigger is not necessarily better. In the case of Albert Kahn's wellness program, the wellness committee chose to start its wellness program out small. They looked for activities that would address the employees' interests as well as those that did not require a lot of resources.

An early wellness initiative was a walking program that was started in May 2006. Employees purchased pedometers and logged their steps. If they walked 50 miles by Labor Day, they were reimbursed the cost of the pedometer. Twenty-five percent of Albert Kahn's employees ordered pedometers, and over 50% walked 50 miles or more during the challenge. Employees still take advantage of the skywalks and concourse that connects their building with others in the area, and also walk the extensive path system throughout the New Center area during their lunch hour and breaks.

The wellness committee, guided by an outside facilitator, chose to promote stair usage as a small, but effective way to encourage physical activity. TV screens throughout the office display messages touting the benefits of stair usage. Also, motivational signs such as *No waiting one door over* and *Step up to a healthier lifestyle* are strategically placed near elevators. Another low-cost initiative involved changing the vending machines contents. The vendor was asked to stock the machines with healthier food items. The snacks are marked with a heart so employees know which ones are considered a healthier choice. The wellness committee has also planned a series of lunch and learns and health screenings.

Small changes have helped Albert Kahn create a healthier worksite environment.

Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Offering employees incentives that are of value to them help to maintain interest and participation. High gas prices made gas cards a valued incentive!
- Using available free or low cost resources. There is a lot of information on the internet. Take advantage of it.
- Using a facilitator can be very helpful in keeping the wellness program on track and provided resources. The facilitator made things run more smoothly.



Lessons Learned

- Actions speak louder than words. Some employees see their coworkers using the stairs, and they imitate the healthy behavior.
- Health risk appraisals increase employees' awareness. They know their health status and areas they can improve upon.
- Getting employee interest and input helped with planning activities.

Cost: Nominal

Risk Factor: Nutrition, physical inactivity

Impact/Reach: 25% (50 employees)

Business/Sector:

Planning/Design/Management

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